What to Expect? The Role of Media Technologies in Refugees' Resettlement

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This article examines the entanglement between refugees' Internet use and their present living conditions of resettlement in Sweden and Germany. It seeks to provide a new perspective by applying the operational concept of expectation as developed by Niklas Luhmann. Expectations emerge in the interplay between the user and the materiality as well as functionality of media technologies that are embedded in concrete living conditions. In the case of disappointed expectations, a cognitive or normative expectation stabilization strategy is applied. Based on in-depth interviews, it becomes obvious that where cognitive expectations are concerned, openness to change one's expectations, and therefore learning, is increased.

Keywords: refugee, Internet use, expectation, resettlement

When I met Rihanna (age 28) again, who was a refugee[2] from Syria, the first thing she said to me was, "We bought a house!" (personal communication, October 22, 2019). During her five years living in her new country, she married her boyfriend from her home country and gave birth to two sons. Comfortable with studying, she quickly learned the new language and got a job in a café. If the smartphone is not occupied by her kids, she uses the Internet for interior design tips, online shopping, and fitness training after two pregnancies.

When I asked Bator (age 25), a man from Afghanistan who had been living in his new country for four years, how he was doing, he seemed to be frustrated with his present situation of not getting a job. He is unskilled and doing badly learning the new language. He has almost given up and spends most of the time watching TV shows in his native language and playing computer games. His new country is still a closed book to him. "If I could, I would go back," he once wrote on his Facebook page (personal communication, August 27, 2019).

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[2] I use the term "refugee" for the group of people who applied for and have received residence permits due to their refugee status. Some of my interviewees have since gained a permanent residence permit and even citizenship and are now former refugees.

These two examples show the breadth of the narratives told in the interviews conducted between 2017 and 2020. The interviews revolved around the question of how refugees with residence permits manage to enter their new societies by highlighting the role that Internet media play. Because their Internet use is not seen as an independent practice, but rather as a communicative action involving a technology that is aimed at managing the challenges of beginning life anew, I explore the wider entanglement between one's Internet use and one's present living conditions of resettlement. My point of departure is the fact that communication in today's destination countries is highly digitalized. This results in new uncertainties for the individuals who also must manage all the possibilities the communication technologies offer. How do they make sense of them regarding uncertain life circumstances? What is, thereby, the function of media technologies? To paraphrase Nassehi (2019), what problems do media technologies "solve" (and also cause) in the context of resettlement?

Theoretical Approach: From Affordances to Expectations

To explore the role of digital media for refugees, a large body of literature has already addressed this issue (see Alencar, 2020, for an exhaustive literature overview) by using various theoretical approaches, such as transnationalism, media practices, network theories, and affordances. The approach I use in this article, the concept of expectation, is a novel one—at least not applied to the issue being addressed.

To mention only some recurring claims in the literature, the role of smartphones during flight, for example, is seen as "logistics from below" (Arnold & Görland, 2019, p. 101; Gillespie, Osseiran, & Cheesman, 2018) or as a lifeline (Alencar, Kondova, & Ribbens, 2019; Harney, 2013; Maitland, 2018a)—providing ontological security (Smets, 2018), or the experience of information precarity (Wall, Otis Campbell, & Janbek, 2015). This also applies to resettlement, where smartphones easily enable contact with families back home (Emmer, Richter, & Kunst, 2016), which can have both positive and negative effects (Leurs, 2019). Media technologies enable political lives (Marlowe, 2019), give hope (Twigt, 2018), or are used as tools for surveillance (Alencar et al., 2019; Leurs & Smets, 2018) and for digital self-presentations (Leurs & Patterson 2020). In other words, media technologies generally enable migration and play a crucial part in flight and resettlement (Maitland, 2018b).

Theoretically, media and communication scholars increasingly use the concept of affordances (Alencar, 2020) as developed by Gibson (1986) to explain the relationship between human beings and media technologies. Briefly, and in a somewhat contradictory manner, its point of departure is that media technologies have inherent objective demands or invitations that are equal for all humans, or invariant properties that are "always there to be perceived" (Gibson, 1986, p. 139). With that, media technologies can, on the one hand, be ascribed an essence or an intrinsic nature that is equally experienced. If you want to access the Internet, you need a digital device that is connected to the Internet. This is (still) equal to all, but equality ends here, and media technologies can then be experienced in very different ways. On the other hand, Gibson (1986) wants to account for the observer by stressing the relationship between the object and its user because it is the user who perceives the affordances of a thing more or less "correctly": "If the affordances of a thing are perceived correctly, we say that it looks like what it is. But we must, of course, learn to see what things really are. . ." (p. 142). Here, Gibson tries to combine two perspectives that are opposed to each other: essentialism and relationalism.

Scholars have tried to solve the problem of how the relationship between the user and the device can be described from an antiessentialist stance and can move beyond the constraints of an essence that is equal to all. For example, Nagy and Neff (2015) propose the concept of "imagined affordance" when describing the relationship between technical communication devices and human communication. By consequently including the perspective of the user, Nagy and Neff try to avoid the technological determinism inherent in Gibson's (1986) concept of affordance. They argue that "affordances may be present for only one individual or a group of individuals but not for others" (Nagy & Neff, 2015, p. 7). By highlighting individuals' agency, they stress that how to approach technical artifacts differs among individuals. Thus, the authors suggest thinking in terms of an "imagined affordance" that is always embedded in users' imaginations, an affordance that is "dependent upon humans and their actions" (Nagy & Neff, 2015, p. 2). This concept is "opposed to a more rigid and fixed notion of affordance that communication technology scholars have struggled with" (Nagy & Neff, 2015, p. 5). Eventually, they stress, "imagined affordances emerge between users' perceptions, attitudes, and expectations; between the materiality and functionality of technologies; and between the intentions and perceptions of designers" (Nagy & Neff, 2015, p. 5). This concept is, for example, applied by Witteborn (2018) to highlight the "force in forced migration" (p. 24), meaning the complex interplay between users and technology. By taking gendered aspects of migration into consideration, imagined affordances are not only constructed but also contested within concrete social contexts. In my article, I will ask how the respondents handle this challenge by using the concept of expectation.

The Concept of Expectation

In line with this concept of imagined affordances, I draw a distinction between imaginations and expectations, and would highlight that expectations—and not just imaginations—condition how people use media technology and, conversely, that media use also affects expectations. Expectations are based on previous communications. Through media use, expectations can be stabilized, confirmed, and/or disappointed. From a communicative perspective, expectation is a constitutive term of systems theory as developed by Luhmann (1984) and refers to ascribing meaning to something. Luhmann generally points out that life in the modern world has become more uncertain and complex, and we need a selection program to reduce this complexity because a phenomenon cannot be grasped in full. In this regard, uncertainty is transformed into expectations of how a phenomenon or an object will behave in future. Expectations function as a kind of selection mechanism to find the best way of acting in the light of uncertainty. However, the unselected does not disappear, but remains as a kind of horizon of potentialities, which Luhmann calls the horizon of expectations as a clear user or reader-oriented concept in demarcation of Jauss's hermeneutical concept of horizon of expectations. Thus, expectations operate upon the background of the other unselected possibilities of ascribing meaning to something.

Luhmann distinguishes here between perception and expectation. Through perception, the external world is transformed into consciousness, which is a demanding and complex achievement that is dependent on the brain. There is no denying that consciousness encompasses thinking, including imaginations; however, it does not just arise, but must be learned in a certain way. This can be understood as an internal cognitive process, and thoughts such as imaginations are not accessible. However, once imaginations are communicated, they become accessible and are, therefore, transformed into expectations. Thus,

communication is not only limited to uttering a phrase to someone, but also includes using communication media and the operations within these media.

Expectation is something that is communicated and hence becomes observable and comprehensible retrospectively. Only through response, including response from technological devices, do you know whether your expectation is confirmed or not. This is an operational concept because communication media are only effective in the moment of using them, and by operating/using them, a learning process is triggered. In this way, expectations toward a technical device emerge in the interplay between the user and the materiality and functionality of media technologies that are embedded in concrete living conditions.

This concept goes beyond the uses and gratification approach that is focused on looking at reasons for using certain media contents, such as searching for information, escaping from problems, or for finding social companionship, which was criticized as being "too behaviorist" (McQuail, 2005, p. 426). The concept of expectation does not only look at specific media contexts and how needs are satisfied or not but situates media use in topical (what it is about), temporal (past, present, future), and social (interaction with others) contexts.

The temporal connects to choice, that is, to the fact that there are always more possibilities for meaning constructions than are actually performed (Klenk, 2013). As a media user, you have, for example, to reduce the flood of media offerings and to select offers corresponding to your expectations and you may be disappointed with the outcome. That means that disappointments must always be considered in this approach. Here, temporality plays a role. By being on the Internet and using online platforms over a longer time period, the interaction between the user and the communication technology is stabilized. The more experiences you have with media devices and online platforms, the more you can adjust them to your purpose, and your expectations can be stabilized and secured. Here, expectations can change over time by looking at how disappointed expectations are met because not all media content gives you the expected rewards. For example, by expecting to get the right information about immigration policies or information about job vacancies, you have perhaps learned which sites are trustworthy and which are not.

Besides the temporal and topical aspect of the concept, the social dimension is crucial, because it is directed toward others (Luhmann, 1984). By communicating, you take others' expectations into consideration. For example, posting pictures of yourself in front of local tourist attractions may mean you want to show the family left behind, for example, that life in the new country is unfolding well, and you do not want to cause dissent or conflict with your family who just want you to feel happy, which Leurs (2019) characterizes as "ritualistic practices of emotional labor" (p. 645).

The more you gain experience in the selection process, the more you know what works and what does not work according to your expectations. This is a learning process of what to expect that goes hand in hand with cases of disappointment. This concept of expectation is a dynamic concept and does not solely ask for motivations for media use as the uses and gratification approach does. It is an analytical tool for taking change into consideration.

Depending on how expectations play out—that is, whether expectations are met or disappointed— Luhmann (1984) distinguishes mainly between *cognitive* and *normative* expectations (p. 452). There is also

a third variant, which is a mixture of diffuse, undecided normative-cognitive expectation without a plan for how to cope with disappointment (Luhmann, 1971, p. 11). Cognitive expectations mean that, in the event of disappointment, they have to adapt to reality, and a learning process is initiated by changing expectations. For example, if you are disappointed with the outcome of your Web search, then you adapt to this reality in some way, perhaps by improving your online information searching skills. However, normative expectations apply a counterfactual management of stabilization. They blame the object—perhaps there is something wrong with the search engine—and stress the correctness of the expectation of perfect information searching skills. If possible, they impose sanctions, not using a particular search engine for example. Neither of these expectation management strategies applies only to media technologies, but rather to social interaction generally. For example, Bator, as mentioned above, seems to be disappointed with his present life situation and uses a counterfactual management of stabilization. Instead of being open to change and trying to adapt to the labor market, he is just waiting. In this period of "wait and see," online media help him to maintain his expectations and guarantee a kind of stability. He can rely on them because they deliver what he expects.

Expectation Stabilization: The Role of Trust

To dig further into the mechanism of stabilizing expectations, the concept of trust/distrust is useful because it can be applied to both social interactions, including media use. As I have shown elsewhere (Graf, 2018), trust and distrust are key components in human relations and especially in resettlement. To trust somebody means that you expect that person to be fair and not to take advantage of you. This also includes the use of technical devices and media platforms. In cases of distrust, the opposite is the case. In risky and uncertain situations, where you need to act, the concept of trust/distrust plays a special role because you do not have full control over the situation and because the outcome of one's decision to trust is uncertain. When you have decided to trust, possibilities of action are enabled, and you choose one particular action over other actions despite the possibility of being harmed. Generally, when trust is absent in social relations, people feel alienated from the country they live in. In the long run, a society without trustful human relations would fall apart.

In the special case of refugees, Raghallaigh (2013) explores the difficulties in creating trusting relationships in the new country. The reasons for the widespread mistrust among the explored refugee population originate mainly from the past social experiences in the hostile environment they fled from and that are intensified by their current living conditions. They also originate from present experiences of being mistrusted by, for example, the authorities of the destination country, especially in the refugee status determination procedures. This is why many refugees hold the expectation of distrusting people and institutions also in the new environment, which is the norm rather than the exception when facing life in the new country. Mistrust is used as a coping strategy "aimed at self-protection" (Raghallaigh, 2013, p. 8). To trust would automatically mean to potentially harm oneself, thus being suspicious of people is a kind of survival strategy. In new and unfamiliar surroundings, it takes time to invest in trusting relationships, which is difficult when one is negatively socially recognized. Raghallaigh (2013) concludes that a "high level of mistrust leads to anxiety and vigilance in one's interactions with others" and to "interpersonal difficulties, loneliness and isolation" (p. 15) for many refugees.

However, expectations in general, and trust/mistrust in particular, are not carved in stone. They are temporary and can be changed if they are repeatedly disappointed. I will come back to this when discussing the interviews.

The Interview Study

All the interviewees were approached by e-mail and informed of the content of the research in general and the interview in particular; the information was available in accessible and understandable language. They were also informed about their rights to discontinue participation at will without any disadvantages. The interviewee then made the decision whether to participate in the interview, and compliance could be expected from both sides. This oral consent was the foundation for creating a mutually respectful relationship, where I treated the interviewees as agents rather than as objects of research (Thapliyal & Baker, 2018). They were also informed that informant confidentiality would be ensured when transcribing the interviews and describing them in my publications. For example, they were given an alias in the article, and I have tried to mention only the minimum necessary personal information.

The interviews with 20 refugees from Syria and Afghanistan living in Sweden and Germany were conducted over a period of almost four years (2017–20). All of the interviewees, between 25 and 60 years of age, including 13 men and seven women, had received residence permits. Some were approached through a research assistant in their native language who also did some of the interviews and others via snowballing and the Red Cross. The interviewees were selected on the basis of being frequent Internet users, having received residence permits, and studying the language of the country of asylum. They had lived between 2.5 and seven years in their new country, and they did not plan to return to their home countries. There was a good mixture of educational level ranging from unskilled to university graduates.

The interviews lasted between one and two hours and took place mostly in cafés near their places of residence. In three cases, there were several follow-up interviews in private settings. From these interviews in particular, I gained a deeper insight into their feelings and thoughts on being a newcomer. Most of the interviews were recorded and selectively transcribed. Especially from the follow-up interviews, when we talked about all and nothing, I took notes to remember project-relevant information.

Because of the focus on resettlement, a great deal of the conversations addressed issues of how to comprehend the new society and culture in which the interviewees found themselves. Thereby, it became obvious that the use of online media is deeply intertwined with the present life situation and almost "invisible" (see also Deuze, 2012). Often, I asked them especially to come back to the topic of media use.

In analyzing the interviews, I identified the passages that can be allotted to the wide topic of media use—that is, where media become most relevant. Or in other words, where media provide some sort of answer (or not) to an observed problem. These passages were then analyzed using open coding in search of what they are about (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Finally, I considered all interviews together and looked for more general thematic pattern to identify expectation management strategies.

To structure the analysis of the interviews in this article, I set off from the topical aspect of the concept of expectation. I noticed that the most widely discussed topics in the interviews revolved around two main themes. The first was about how to deal with one's past under conditions of connected presence. Here, I focus mainly on maintaining or cutting off contact with relatives and friends back home. The other main topic was how to approach the new society, which is, under conditions of a mediatized everyday life, something new for my respondents who used to have in-person rather than online contact. Here, a kind of subtopic arose that deals with the issue of entering the labor market via a digitalized application system. Under conditions of hardly meeting a person on site, my respondents were forced how to learn to navigate through different labor application sites.

Through my interviews, and especially through the follow-up interviews, I observed that attitudes and behaviors are in flux and change, so I needed a dynamic theoretical concept that takes changes and developments into consideration. That is why I apply the systems theoretical concept of expectation as explained above. Thereby, I am especially interested in how disappointed expectations were managed.

How to Cope With One's Past

This topic revolved very much around the fact that most of my interviewees have family and relatives back home or their family is scattered all over the world. How do you relate to them in a digitalized everyday life, where you can always be approached while simultaneously having to cope with the social and cultural patterns of the new country? It becomes clear that this is a process. I was able to distinguish two different temporal phases of coping strategies. One phase can be described as the new country being experienced as a "closed book"—a new world surrounded by mistrust. In this phase, sociality is mostly directed at maintaining the former relationships with one's own ethnic group and a kind of normative expectation management is applied. When dealing with disappointed expectations, I observed that in this phase, a counterfactual management of expectation stabilization is often used.

In the other phase, the new country is seen as a place of transit for building up trusting relationships with the new society, which can also be described as a kind of beginning of a new life project. According to the social dimension of the concept of expectation, this phase is especially characterized by others, including agencies and organizations in the destination country, or locals' expectations being considered. In other words, during your stay in the receiving country you learn—or begin to learn—what the new country expects from you at different levels so that you can act accordingly, which means a learning process is initiated in the event of disappointment. With that, you have "opened the book." Not all interviewees had gone through these two phases. Some had not succeeded yet, while others had opened the book right from the beginning of their stay, and yet others had gone through both phases. I would like to illustrate this below with some stories from the interviews.

A Connected Presence to the Past

When I met Aisha, a 40-year-old housewife with a high school degree, for the first time in 2017, I met a woman full of self-doubt and lack of self-confidence in starting a new life. "I am too old to study," she told me when I recommended her to view the flight also as a chance (Aisha, personal communication,

September 13, 2017). She and her family had fled from a wealthy, socially rich life in Syria, but everyday life in her new country looked very different. Her family was split; her children had partly left the home and her husband was—as usual—very engaged with his new work and was seldom at home. In her home country, her house had always been open for relatives and friends to gather. She showed me pictures on her phone of happy family reunions, birthday parties, and other gatherings at her home. She was very fond of having relatives and friends around.

Now, all her relatives had left Syria and were spread all over the world. The only gatherings she had were on social media sites. She was always busy following her relatives and friends on social media, commenting on posts and often finding herself admiring and liking their pictures. She tried hard to hold the relatives together on the Internet, which gave her life meaning in a situation of social isolation. During our first meeting, her mobile phone, visible on the table, was signaling constant traffic: phone calls from relatives and friends, text messages, and diverse notification sounds. Socially, her project of "care labor" (Leurs, 2019, pp. 641–649) was to continue being an active node of the family network and to master her role of bringing the family together as she had done before in Syria. Thus, the lack of physical proximity could be partly overcome, and life could continue as usual, at least on the surface (e.g., Diminescu, 2020; Kaufmann, 2018).

She expected that concentrating on continuing her former role in her new life would give her a successful coping strategy to manage her new life. Here, she felt she was on safe ground in an unfamiliar environment, at least in the first years of her exile. She has not been open to change and has hardly approached the new environment. However, my last conversations with her in February 2020 revealed some fundamental changes. She also began to consider the expectations of others outside her family network and a learning process was initiated. She made herself ready for the labor market and no longer felt too old to study. After 25 years as a housewife, she started a professional career. In our last meeting, I noticed that her smartphone was, as usual, on the table but remained relatively silent. No telephone calls, no notifications. She only picked it up to search for a correct translation. It seemed—at least in our conversation—that she was controlling her smartphone and not the other way around. She and her family members no longer seem to expect her to devote herself completely to the family. She has chosen to selectively connect to the past by including the present and future life. She was no longer (only) the manager of a family life, but also the manager of her own life, which meant less time to be accessible to others on the Internet.

Aalim (age 27), from Afghanistan, told me that he is constantly connected to his relatives back home. He has weekly video chats with them, which remind him of his traditional role as the eldest son. After these chats, he often feels in a bad mood. He failed in explaining the new cultural and social patterns he was confronted with, and more specifically, the difficulties he had in finding a proper job that could also feed his family back home. He is unskilled and has only temporary, low-paying jobs that keep him afloat. These weekly video chats hold the family together but also keep them separate. They are separate mentally because the otherness of the new life is something he can only share with peers from his community with the same experiences.

In Aalim's case, "connected presence" with the family left behind has destructive power, at least in the moments he talked about. It hampers his orientation in his new surroundings because the negative

emotions weaken his ability to act (see also Leurs, 2019). He must handle not only the challenges of the new environment, but also the social expectations of the family left behind. When I commented on this and suggested that he not answer the phone, he vehemently shook his head. "It would be worse," he answered (Aalim, personal communication, September 17, 2018). He cannot lose contact with his family even after living in the new country for five years. As Diminescu (2020) points out, being present both here and there "has become a duty" (p. 76) for most migrants. For Aalim, who grew up in clan structures, the collective, the clan/family, defines the role of the individual, which contrasts with the self-determination of the individual in the Western world. Without his family, Aalim feels that he would be nothing. The traditional system of clanship gives him a sense of ontological security and identity (see also Shahrani, 1995). He knows precisely what is expected from him, and he cannot disappoint his family. Aalim is disappointed with the outcome of the chats with his family and applies a normative expectation management by upholding his expectation of being co-present and satisfying the expectations of his family. In the words of systems theory, his weekly chats can be described as a ritual, reducing contingency to necessity to avoid grave consequences. He feels he has no choice.

In this state of mental stress, he spends most of his time on the Internet doing things he feels familiar with such as watching TV shows, following the news about his place of origin, and following and commenting on friends' posts as well as posting status updates. He has developed stable expectations regarding the content of online entertainment platforms that give him the possibility to flee from an everyday life that is at the moment out of control. Without his smartphone, his life would be unbearable. He feels that it gives him instant relief from the sadness and boredom of his present life. He has experienced that there is always something interesting and exciting to follow and to share with others. Reactions to his posts give him a feeling of empowerment, which also provides him with hope for a better future (Twigt, 2018), in which he hopes to have a job that can feed him as well as his family back home.

However, his selective and extensive online media use gives him little opportunity to approach the on- and offline world connected to his new country. So far, he is more inclined to remain in the "old world" rather than create a new pattern that would give him the chance to develop social trust in his new country. On the one hand, he can hide behind the screen, which prevents him from becoming approachable for relationships outside his ethnic community. On the other hand, he also knows that he must fulfill the expectations of his family to send the required remittances. In this respect, he feels that he must approach the new society by expecting cognitively. To be prepared, he told me (and also himself) that "everything is different" in the new world and that he "has to adapt" (Aalim, personal communication, September 9, 2019). This functions as a coping strategy to manage disappointed expectations by making things comprehensible to him and, eventually, initiating a learning process. By separating the new from the old world, he tries to build up new expectations without losing the former ones, which functions as expectation stabilization through hybrid identifications.

Disconnecting From the Past

In contrast to Aalim, Ahmad (age 30+), who is a physician from Afghanistan, has developed the habit of mainly disconnecting from the past, although his family is still in his country of origin. How to cope with one's past in a digitalized everyday life was for him the outcome of a learning process, which is a

cognitive expectation stabilization. Through disappointed expectations, he has learned to reduce his online contacts with his relatives and friends back home strictly and even to block news channels and other sources from his home country. He explained the main reason for doing so: "They [Afghans in Afghanistan] usually share news from Afghanistan and most of it is negative [bombings or political instability], which makes me sad" (Ahmad, personal communication, June 3, 2018).

He has experienced that always being connected to his place of origin does not work for him. He has adapted to this reality by no longer using these platforms. However, disconnecting from the past is not an easy process, he explained. On the one hand, he was used to a busy social life in his home country, both personally and professionally. He came to his new country as an adult and has left relatives and friends in his home country whom he can easily connect to whenever he wants. Furthermore, despite having lived in the new country for three years and having studied the new language and customs, he still feels like a stranger. On the other hand, he has learned from his new life that he has to focus on his present life situation and that he has to adjust his media use accordingly—that is, he must develop new trustful relationships with the locals. Otherwise, he will not succeed, he emphasizes. Because his new life takes a lot of energy, he cannot "waste time and energy on the past" (Ahmad, personal communication, June 3, 2018), he tells himself. However, he feels an obligation to follow the news because he has family and friends there. He also calls them from time to time. But he prefers to draw a strict line between the past and the present, which he admits is difficult to achieve in a mediatized everyday life. Separating the former from the present life is a kind of expectation stabilization management "to protect myself to keep positive and going" (Ahmad, personal communication, June 3, 2018). In this respect, he uses social media only for new friends and for Afghans living abroad because he can share similar experiences and learn from them.

He has deliberately differentiated his media use. Regarding his relatives in Afghanistan, he only makes phone calls and has not included them on social media sites. This habit prevents him from meeting his relatives' expectation of him always being available and connected to them, which helps keep away negative emotions at bay.

To sum up, there are two lines of expectation management: Aalim and Aisha initially developed stabile expectations toward online media that function as filling the gap in what has been lost. Regarding approaching the new society, they use normative expectations by staying mentally in one's former life, which makes their new life bearable, at least at first. In contrast, Ahmad expected cognitively, and thus has learned from his disappointments and has changed his media use. To make himself approachable to build up new trustful relationships, he knows that he has to consider the expectations of others, those who live in the new country, which takes up his full attention. Simultaneously, the experience of having a choice when using the media strengthens his feeling of controlling one's own media use and therefore one's life, which gives him self-confidence.

How to Approach the New Country: The Digital Way of Communication

Based on previous expectations, my interviewees were surprised about the widespread use of online communication in the life of the locals. Ahmed noticed, for example, "Here, you get connected to people mostly first online. You write to them and once they get to know you, then you can approach them offline. In both

professional and personal life" (Ahmad, personal communication, June 3, 2018). For him, "it is extreme and sometimes I can't approach someone offline. It becomes frustrating for me, for example, to visit a doctor, going online and booking online, or meeting any state agency, and sometimes you can only book time online" (Ahmad, personal communication, June 3, 2018). For him, the normal way is at least to meet someone first in person and then perhaps continue online. This also goes for online dating platforms or online chat platforms that he finds "strange" because people hardly meet in person. This preference for in-person meetings to get reliable information is confirmed by other studies (e.g., Alencar, 2017; Maitland, 2018b).

In contrast, Farman (age 31), who is an employee from Afghanistan, appreciates the way people are approached in Sweden from online to in-person meetings, when communicating with locals because they are easier to reach and, especially, to understand linguistically. He generally spoke of his fast integration into the new society thanks to the Internet:

> When I came to Sweden, I got lots of information on the Internet. I was able to make a wide network through searching in Google. I can say that during one and half years in Sweden, I have met 10 to 15 Swedish families. We are still connected and invite each other to do things regularly. (Farman, personal communication, June 2, 2018)

From his online contacts, he has developed trustful relationships with Swedish people. Using the Internet to meet locals and then continuing offline is for Farman the best way to gain knowledge about the new society.

These different expectations of how to approach the locals are, in event of disappointment, about examining and renewing expectations. To cope with this disappointment of what communication looks like in everyday life, Ahmad has initiated a learning process through changing his expectations. He has adapted to reality, as Farman did earlier, and has realized that online communication has become crucial in everyday life.

With respect to what it means for building up trustful relationships with the locals, all agree that there are differences between online and offline communication. Hadi (age 22), a student from Afghanistan, no longer expects to be able to develop deep relationships from online communication platforms, but feels they can be used anyway. Finally, he uses them, but spends less time on social media for personal information and does not share any pictures of his personal life. He has learned that not all personal information posted on these sites can be expected to correspond to reality, and has therefore decided not to post any himself. To be honest with oneself and with others is for him a precondition for managing the beginning of a new life project in new social settings. For that reason, he has reduced the usage of certain social media sites he does not find trustworthy.

Dahyu (age 30), a media worker, however, applied a counterfactual management of expectation stabilization by upholding his expectation. He stresses the correctness of his expectation by claiming that trustful relationships among people are based on in-person meetings and cannot be built up online. According to him, online communication loses "authenticity" and instead delivers "fake moments in life, and fake feelings" (Dahyu, personal communication, June 11, 2018). Because he "like(s) to meet people and talk to them in real life" (Dahyu, personal communication, June 11, 2018), he is not active in online chats

and dating applications. Therefore, Dahyu has finished his use of diverse chat platforms and seeks to meet people in person instead. In the words of the concept of expectation, he imposed sanctions on these platforms by stopping using them.

How to Enter the Labor Market

In the case of seeking a job to earn one's livelihood, which is crucial for refugees to reestablish their autonomy, the interviewees talked about obstacles they have not yet overcome. Obstacles that occur are not only about making one's own professional preconditions align with the requirements of the labor market, but first and foremost about comprehending the digital way of seeking information about vacancies and handling at least the application system. It is a formalized digital process, which my interviewees did not always expect and were not always able to manage. I thought that being familiar with using the smartphone would also mean knowing how to seek job vacancies that would correspond to one's skills and background. But this was not always the case. This can be compared with what Wall et al. (2015) call "information precarity"—that is, "the condition of instability that refugees experience in accessing news and personal information" (p. 1) and, in this case, the inability to understand the digital job application system.

Consequently, my interviews often ended up with me looking for job announcements because I thought, despite reluctance from the employment agencies, that the interviewee had relevant job experience and there would be some kind of labor market demand. I sent the application links to my interviewees and translated and explained the job requirements. In one case, I helped fill out the application form in German, and I realized how difficult it is for a newcomer. The application form was, of course, tailored for locals with required information that did not take differences in formal and informal educational and professional backgrounds into account. This was about an unskilled job opportunity, but it still required documents such as proof of graduation, documented work experiences, and recommendations from former employers. These documents are difficult to obtain in war-torn countries, let alone to bring with you on a risky flight. Also, the skills and knowledge the applicants have are not always directly transferable. If you have helped out in your family's retail store, and are mostly self-taught, you do not have any certificates to prove your expertise. As a result, we were unable to fill out some of the required information, and our attempts to get a job via this means were unsuccessful. Perhaps it was even somewhat counterproductive, something I had not expected. Filling out the form and writing a letter of interest using correct language gave the impression of being proficient in the language of the new country. The interviewee told me later about a phone call from a potential employer who initially was interested in hiring him but changed their mind during the conversation because of the interviewee's poor language skills. A direct face-to-face contact would have made this clear from the very beginning and would have saved us from filling out the form.

Detached from impersonal digital application systems, formal access to the labor market is difficult to achieve for these people. It is not only about language skills and lack of contacts but also about a whole formal application culture that is unknown, especially among people from an informal labor market where, for example, relatives and friends arrange jobs. They expected more personal meetings at employment agencies and with potential employers as well. Those, who became disappointed from this way of seeking a job, applied a counterfactual expectation stabilization. They blamed the impersonal application system and searched above all for help within traditional ties of relatives, friends, and other members of their ethnic

groups. They insisted on in-person meetings instead of forms to be filled in, which resulted in some success. Often, they got their first jobs in businesses run by their compatriots such as restaurants and retail shops. Or they were recommended by a friend to employers who had already employed other refugees through temporary employment agencies that post refugees to various companies as subcontracted labor on a low threshold, which are often precarious forms of work (Maroufi, 2017). The result is that for most of the interviewees, contact with their own community in the city where they lived was crucial to gaining access to the labor market, even though it was low-paid or under-skilled work. Seeking help from traditional ties has a low threshold because you can expect mutual understanding and trust.

Ahmad, in contrast, applied a cognitive expectation management by quickly learning how to use online platforms to build up new professional networks with both locals and Afghans in exile, which supports his goal to find a proper job. For that purpose, he frequently uses LinkedIn to develop job-related networks. As mentioned above, he makes himself approachable to the new country by including available online tools to succeed in his professional life.

Conclusions

As Schütz (1944) stresses, the newcomer "has to reckon with fundamental discrepancies in seeing things and handling situations" (p. 504). Applied to present mediatized life, there are additional fundamental discrepancies and uncertainties that a newcomer must manage—namely, the adjustment to a digital communicative environment that changes the possibilities of building trusted relationships in the new society.

Being successful in resettlement under conditions of media omnipresence, the agency of the individuals in relation to media technologies is therefore "repeatedly challenged," as Witteborn (2018) highlights (p. 24). You constantly need to make choices (on the Internet) because there are always more possibilities for meaning constructions than are possible to carry out. Here, communication technologies further support the general transformation of contemporary Western societies toward an increased individualization.

As a consequence, the management of one's own life project is in greater demand than ever before. Internet media can help the newcomer to gain control over one's life project, but also to lose it because the relations between humans and technology are double edged, or in the words of Bernard Stiegler, both "curing" and "poisoning" (as cited in Lemmens, 2011, p. 36). You expect one thing from using media technology, but you can simultaneously get the opposite in return. Your choices regarding how to deal with digitalized communication are consequently highly contingent because all could be otherwise; a supposedly reliable source can turn out to be unreliable. To manage an abundance of possibilities, you need experiences transformed into knowledge, or in other words, digital literacy.

A society that is mainly based on digital communication raises the threshold for those who are unfamiliar with this way of communicating. Easier access to information, translation programs, and familiar networks does not necessarily mean that knowledge of the new cultural and social patterns of the destination country can be gained more easily. This might be the case for some, but not for all. Thus, ability to adjust depends on expectation structures to reduce the uncertainty inherent in unfamiliar surroundings.

To explore how individuals make sense of the possibilities communication technologies offer, the notion of expectation gives an insight into their thoughts. The overarching expectation toward media technologies is, ultimately, about (re)gaining and maintaining control over one's personal and professional life in times of upheaval, which can mitigate uncertainties. It is about finding footings that bring orientation in a new environment with, for example, reliable information and trustworthy personal and institutional contacts and with that, a kind of normality. It turns out that online media are successful in supporting this goal because they offer something for everyone.

Through interacting with digital media, an expectation management is developed in line with how expectations fall out, whether they are fulfilled or disappointed. If you are disappointed with the outcomes of mediated communication, you can both expect them cognitively and normatively—that is, expectations can be changed or maintained. For example, in being disappointed with digital application procedures, you can react to them differently. You can blame yourself for not knowing it by initiating a learning process, or you can stop using this way of applying for jobs by blaming the system. Consequently, where cognitive expectations are concerned, you are more open to revise your expectations, and with that to increase your scope for action. Eventually, the difference between both ways of coping with disappointments is about learning or not learning (Luhmann, 1971). Therefore, cognitive expectations fulfill a crucial role in the resettlement processes.

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